Devil's Standtable
You have reached the Devil's Standtable. The "mushroom rock" presents a striking profile against the light sky as viewed from below**.** It was once a large block of the bluff that cracked loose during earth movements. The wind and rain erosion of the surface removed the softer areas of sandstone in the mid-section of the pillar leaving the large base and iron embedded cap much larger, which creates the mushroom-like appearance. Eventually, the entire structure might erode away or be tumbled by an earthquake. These geologic processes take place over thousands, or even millions of years.

Park History
The main stream that lies across the road from the Devil's Standtable area is Giant City Creek. The creek drains these areas during times of heavy rain or snow melt. The "streets of a giant city" rock formation on the hillside to the southeast, and the Devil's Standtable, are two of the prominent features that led to the area being purchased and dedicated as a state park. In 1927, 900 acres were purchased from the Rendleman's. Giant City State Park now encompasses more than 4,000 acres that provide a buffer zone of land around these unique natural features and provide protection to the watershed, geologic formations, plants, and animals. In most years, more than one million visitors come to the park to visit these interesting sandstone formations, old forests, and lovely streams.

Please carry out what you carry in.

Cigarette Butts are litter!
Plastic bottles and cans are litter!!

Thank you for visiting Giant City State Park.

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This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

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Devil's Standtable Nature Trail

Length: 1/3 mile
Difficulty: Moderate
Walking Time: 30 minutes

Giant City State Park
235 Giant City Road
Makanda, IL 62958
618-457-4836
http://www.dnr.state.il.us

Devil's Standtable Nature Trail

Be careful-steep cliffs are dangerous and sandstone can be slippery.
Please stay on designated trails.
Poison ivy exists on this trail.
Copperhead snakes (venomous) hibernate in the sandstone bluffs.

The Devil's Standtable Trail leads to a unique geologic formation that has dominated the bluff line landscape here for thousands of years. Called by many "the mushroom rock," this large free-standing pillar of sandstone must have seemed more like a pulpit for the devil to many local folks. Their name for it has stuck, and it remains one of the most interesting geologic features of Giant City State Park. Leading up to the Devil's Standtable are many other interesting features described below.

Sandstone Bluffs

Bluffs that face south or southwest differ greatly from ones that face north because of different climatic conditions. Because they receive sunlight all day long in winter and summer, these bluffs are warmer and moisture evaporates rapidly. The dry bluff tops are perfect habitat for prickly pear cactus, huckleberry, red cedar, and other dry soil loving plants. The shaded cracks and fissures hold moisture longer, so ferns, mosses and other moisture loving plants are abundant in them. The light tan color of natural sandstone is sometimes hidden on the bluff surface by a think layer of gray and green lichens. Lichens are fungi with algae cells inside them that produce food for both plants. They grow on bare rocks or bark, and as they die, mosses grow in the thin layer of organic material that is left on the rocks. This change from bare rock to soil by plant growth is called "primary plant succession."

Bluff Formation

Three hundred million years ago, Illinois was a shallow swamp like southern Florida is today. Trees and other plants fell in the swamps and were covered with sediment and compressed to form coal. Swamps drained into a shallow sea just a few miles to the south of Giant City. The Shawnee Hills area was a river delta and great sand bars, shoals, and dunes became compacted and cemented together over many years to form the sandstone seen today. Uplift and fracturing of the sedimentary rocks has occurred due to earthquakes (plate tectonic action) some 270 million years ago. Thus, what was once a low river delta near seal level is now a series of hills and bluffs ranging in elevation from 350 feet to 1,000 feet above sea level. For the many millions of years since formation, the sandstone that is exposed has eroded. Iron deposits leave reddish ridges exposed in some areas.

Big Trees

Most of southern Illinois's forests were completely cleared in the early 1800s. Sometimes small tracts of trees were left standing because the ground was too rugged to farm. The large white oak trees in this forest are at least a hundred years old and were probably good sized when pioneers moved into this valley. White oak is the State Tree of Illinois, and the wood is prized for furniture, barrels, and paneling. Note the whitish appearance of its bark.

White Oak
Quercus alba

Wildlife Habitat

The bluff provides protection for many animals. The pigeons (Rock doves) who nest on the ledges are not a nuisance here as they are in cities because predators such as snakes and hawks prey on them and control their numbers. Bank swallows also nest in the cracks of the bluff by building a mud nest on the cliff face. They can be seen in the summer gliding gracefully from tree to bluff and back. Chipmunks live in the cracks and holes at the foot of the bluff.

Rock Shelter

The immense rock shelter overhang formed because the softer sandstone in the lower part of the bluff eroded faster than the iron or permeated upper layers, forming a ledge, giving protection to the areas below. Prehistoric Native Americans used these caves as homes and, evidence of their activities can be found along the drip line of the bluffs. Small pieces of "chert" or "flint," the by-products of tool making, washes out of the ground where water drips from the bluff during rainfall.

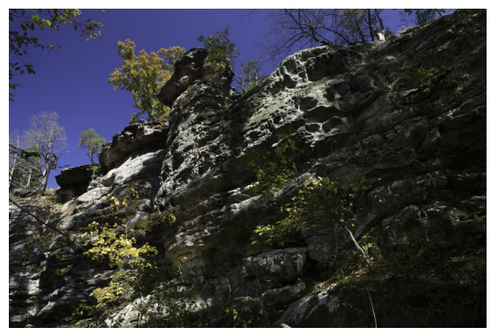

Photo compliments of Janet Sundberg